

Hiraeth

by annequinox

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Summary: He hated her for a lot of things. But most of all, he hated her because in the end, he still forgave her, for Lucy was Lucy and he loved every bit of her. Even the bitter ends.

Hiraeth

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DISCLAIMER: _I do not own Fairy Tail, Hiro Mashima does._

* * *

><p>It all started on a rainy morning.</p>

He usually woke up first and prepared breakfast for the two of them. On weekends, she liked to be up and about at six in the morning, humming a tune her mother used to sing while sipping on black coffee. She would begin writing for her manuscript and stop exactly at eight to cook. Sometimes, she would cook plenty enough for their whole team to eat. She said she somehow knew they would come over whenever she did.

But today was the first time she didn't wake up first. It was the last Saturday of July and if he remembered clearly, her deadline was in two weeks so she had no time to slack off.

He remembered waking up to the sound of rain pelting on the roof. It was a shameâ€"they had been planning on going on a picnic with their team to celebrate Happy's kittens but he guessed that would have to wait. Wordlessly, he looked over at his wife and gently caressed her face. "Lucy," he whispered, his thumb ghosting over her lips. "Wake up."

She stirred in her sleep but didn't wake up. Chuckling to himself, he got out of bed and looked at the time. Half past seven. Deciding that he would be the one to prepare their breakfast this morning, he put on a shirt and headed for the kitchen.

Lucy woke up a few minutes later. With lazy footsteps, she entered the dining room and sat in front of the table. She could smell the food from where she was sitting.

"Good morning Luce."

She looked up from her fingers and stared at Gray who was beginning to fill their table with plates and dishes. She smiled back and kissed him.

He could tell her smile was forced. He wanted to point it out but after seeing how tired she looked, decided against it.

"How's your manuscript going?" He questioned excitedly. He had always been a fan of her works, back to when they were only teammates. So when they got married and she decided to write another novel, he was more than happy to offer his full support.

Lucy chewed slowly and was staring at the ceiling. He knew that she was thinking of what to say. "It's progressing smoothly," she finally said, taking another spoonful of rice. "I don't know what to do about the ending though." Maybe I should ask for an extension."

The smile was wiped off his face immediately. This was odd. Lucy never asked for extensions. She always finished before the deadline and never complained about her hectic schedule. Because according to her, asking for extensions was cowardly. She claimed it always felt like a challenge to complete her works in time. To her, that was already an accomplishment.

"Are you sure?" He worriedly asked. She nodded and didn't seem to mind that he was openly staring at her as if she was some stranger.

He decided to let it go. "Okay."

They continued eating in silence. At first, he thought she was only stressed out. Now he wished he had asked her what's wrong.

* * *

><p>Later that afternoon, he decided to buy her favorite latte at the cafÃ© down their street.</p>

The weather wasn't particularly harsh at that time, so he thought it was a good opportunity to cheer her up. She was acting weird, but she always was. There were days when she'd cry over pineapples and some days where she was dancing in her underwear at three in the morning. But Lucy was Lucy and he loved every bit of her. Even the bitter ends.

He could vaguely recall their very first fight. Lucy had caused it. They were only a couple back thenâ€"young and stupid. Well, they still were, just in older bodies. When the order to move into Fairy Tail was issued years ago, Lucy claimed she didn't want to leave her

apartment. With half the city nearly destroyed by Zeref, there was no place to live and the guild had to stick together to keep everyone safe.

Lucy had insisted that she had her spirits, and that her apartment was untouched. He believed her then, but didn't understand her logic. His home, too, was left unscratched by the war, but he never once thought of staying there instead. His family needed him and his girlfriend needed him, so he hadn't thought of going anywhere else.

He had been asked by Erza to talk to Lucy and change her mind. He accepted it immediately. He thought he would be able to talk her out of it with just a few words. But Lucy wouldn't budge.

That night was full of screaming and rage. Screaming because they couldn't hear each other over the construction of the city, and rage because she half expected him to side with her. She called him names, some which Natsu had already thought of, and some that still made him cringe up to this day. He would have ended up hating her, if she had not broken down into tears while apologizing, whispering her parents' names into the wind. That's when he understood. The cemetery was possibly destroyed, and the only place left to remember them by was her apartment with their things.

He managed to convince master that they would be just fine, and they were exempted from the list that were meant to live in the guild. She had asked him then if he loved her still, and he muttered the words as if they were a promise.

Today seemed just like one of those days when she didn't have money to pay the rent anymore. But he knew that that was not the case. They bought her apartment a year after their marriage and never worried about the rent anymore. However, he knew she wasn't feeling well.

The latte she loved was apparently removed from their menu. He didn't know what to do. Lucy had been drinking in this cafÃ© for years, back to when they weren't even together yet. Frowning, he scratched the back of his neck and pocketed his hand.

"I'll have a mocha frappe then," he said uneasily while paying the amount needed. The cashier nodded and he went to sit back in the corner.

He looked out the window and saw that the rain was letting up. This somehow brought a smile to his face. Maybe he could take her out for dinner later. That sounded like a good plan.

By the time his order came, the rain had completely stopped. He had a feeling that he was going in the right direction, so he took his order from the counter and left the cafÃ©.

The air was cold and the world looked beautiful after the rain. People were starting to get out of their houses, possibly to get some food or to stroll around. Looking up, he realized that the sky was still covered with gray clouds. He frowned. Perhaps it was still going to rain?

He shook his head. He wasn't going to let that stop him. With that

resolve set in mind, he went home.

He found her on her desk inside their room, hunched over her manuscript and dipping her pen in ink a couple of times. He had offered to buy her a pen that already had an ink barrel inside but she declined, claiming that she wanted to feel like a writer of the old times.

He smiled at the sight of her. She had changed into her bathrobe and he could smell her shampoo. His smile widened. He knew she took a hot bath. Possibly, a long one.

"Hey," he greeted casually, leaning against the door frame as he watched her work. She looked up from her manuscript and beamed. "I bought you a frappe."

"Really?"

"Yeah."

In moments, she was pushing her chair back and heading towards him. His smile faltered, but he fixed it immediately. He could see traces of scratches on her neck and rings around her eyes. Had she not been sleeping well? He didn't notice.

"What flavor?" She inquired excitedly, tying the knot of her robe tighter and clasping her hands behind her.

He handed her the paper bag. "Mocha."

Her eyes widened and her face broke out into a grin. "Mm, yum!" She took the frappe out of the bag and took a sip. "Thanks, Gray."

He automatically gave her a kiss on the forehead. "Anything for you, Luce."

Thankfully, she cheered up afterwards. Color returned to her skin and she was laughing more often as he laid on the bed and read on some of her old works. He really liked her first piece, "Captive". It was full of drama and fantasy, all centered around a kidnapped princess. He could imagine the lead character as Lucy and not the girl described in the story.

The princess didn't have a happy ending though.

When evening came and Lucy was only left with two chapters to write, she decided to call it a day and resume her work tomorrow. Gray instantly knew it was the perfect time for a date.

"Say, why don't you and I go out for dinner? How does that sound?"

She looked surprise with the offer and started fiddling with the string of her robe. "I don't know," she muttered quietly, her voice unsteady. "Maybe another time. I'm a bit tired."

But you haven't been anywhere yet, he wanted to say. He didn't though. Perhaps today just wasn't their day. Maybe she felt down because the weather was rainy.

Yeah, maybe that was it.

* * *

><p>The following days weren't any good either. She had slowly progressed from bad to worse, and she started to hate going outside. This wasn't supposed to be a problem, but she soon got sick from not eating well. Because of this, Gray had no other choice than to exclude himself from their team's missions to watch over her.</p>

She was laying on their bed with her hair fanned out under her like a halo. As he sat beside her, he held her hand and gave it a squeeze. Normally that would be enough to wake her up. This time though, it didn't even make her cringe.

To say that he was worried was an understatement. He was terrified. More than that, he was growing weary with each hour that went by. Lucy's condition hadn't gotten any better. If anything, it seemed to get worse with each passing moment. They didn't even know what was wrong with her to begin with. Porlyusica told them that this was something beyond her league and that she could do nothing to help.

He unconsciously squeezed her hand tighter. Lucy didn't feel like Lucy anymore. She didn't even look like her anymore. Her skin was pale. Very, very pale. And her lips were cracked and blue, almost as if she was freezing to death. However, she had a high fever that wouldn't go down no matter what he did so he knew that that was not the case.

He breathed out a shaky sigh. It had only been a week since she started acting strange, and she was already on her deathbed. He visibly flinched at the word. It was true though, even though his mind wanted to deny it. She was dying and they couldn't stop it.

There was a knock on their door and he drew in a shuddering breath in surprise. He managed to get out a response that sounded like, "Come in," but he wasn't so sure.

Reaching up to rub his eyes, he stopped. He hadn't realized he was crying.

"Gray? Are you in here?" Mira called out hesitantly. He muttered out a low yes and in moments, she was standing beside him, eyes on Lucy's unmoving body. He heard her inhale sharply and he clenched his jaw.

"Oh my," was all she could say. It was barely even a whisper, but he somehow heard it.

I'm sorry, Gray.

The words hung heavily in the air but she didn't say them. They both knew that she was about to though. But Gray was tired of hearing it again and again. Every time someone would visit Lucy, they would immediately apologize at the sight of her. It was as if they were the ones who made her like this.

Despite having wished she hadn't visited at all, Mira smiled and

grabbed the unused stool beside Gray. She took her seat and gently patted down the creases on the comforter.

He looked at her with the slightest bit of confusion in his eyes. "Lucy-chan loves blue so much, doesn't she?" Mira said all of a sudden, her voice light and wistful.

Gray found himself choking, his throat contracting painfully. "Y-Yeah," he agreed, blinking rapidly as he stroked her hand with his thumb. "I-It was annoying at first, but I got used to it."

Mira didn't comment on the fact that he was close to tears. Instead, she continued to smooth out the blanket. "Maybe that's why she chose you."

He released Lucy's hand and covered his mouth, suppressing his gasps as he cried. He hadn't realized that. Back when the war just finished, he had asked her if she liked him enough to go out with him and she didn't answer. He thought that he was rejected.

"Natsu liked her too, you know!"

Gray closed his eyes and clamped his hand over his mouth harder. He could imagine it now. Lucy must have told Natsu that she didn't like him back. That's why she couldn't give him an answer, because she had to talk to his best friend first. Somehow, knowing about that hurt. Not only because he thought she loved Natsu too, but because he had accused her wrongly.

He felt Mira's hand on his back as his body shook violently in sobs. "Shh, Gray, it's alright," she murmured warmly in his ear. "It's going to be alright."

If there was one thing he wished to forget, it would be this very moment. Because it was too much. The pain was unbearable. He had never cried so much in his life and the first time he did was over Ul, but that couldn't even amount to what he felt right now. It was as if a storm was brewing inside of him and thunder clapped every second. It was the wildfire spreading across forests and waves crashing against each other. It was the feeling of a hurricane destroying homes and buildings, unstoppable and dangerous.

It felt like chaos.

But he didn't know why he was crying. She wasn't dead. She was still in front of him, alive and breathing. Weak, yes, but alive nonetheless. Yet even with this knowledge, he couldn't stop his breakdown.

"Let it all out," Mira urged on, continuing to rub soothing circles on his back. "You've had a rough week."

And he did. He let it all out. He cried until his throat went sore from his sobs. Until his tears started to hurt his cheeks. Until the light outside of their window died out and was replaced with pure darkness.

He cried until he fell asleep, and only then did he feel the pain stop.

* * *

><p>Three days later, Lucy started to get better. It wasn't noticeable at first, but with a bit of observation, he could tell that her lips were turning pink once again and that her skin was healthier than before. The moment he noticed it, he felt his energy return.</p>

He spent the next two days helping her regain her health back. It was a slow process, but he was more than willing to wait. His patience had stretched out into unthinkable lengths for her after all.

The day she woke up was on their anniversary. He could remember her suddenly gasp as her eyes flew open. Because he was always by her side, he was quick to aid her in turning her over and patting her back while she coughed repeatedly. She couldn't speak. He expected this so he had fetched her a glass of water to ease her throat.

Honestly, she still looked horrible, but it was better than last week. So even though she looked like a corpse, he smiled and kissed her on the forehead like he always did. When he leaned back to look at her, she had fallen asleep with a smile on her face and he knew then that she was definitely healing.

The next day, he woke up to find her attempting to sit up. He quickly helped her and gently tied her disheveled hair into a ponytail. With her hair out of her face, she looked cleaner. Offering her an encouraging smile, he held her hand and gave it a squeeze.

Lucy didn't look at him, but after a while, he felt her squeeze back. It was soft and it almost wasn't there, but he felt it.

They spent the rest of the day trying to help her get better. By the time lunch came, she was already capable of walking, albeit slowly. She was improving at such a fast rate though that he wasn't sure if it was normal.

Never mind, Natsu healed quick too.

After lunch, he helped her shower. She hadn't had one in so long that they spent an hour and a half in the bath. He talked to her about who visited her and about what happened to the town. At one point, he mentioned that their team was out on a three-day mission and would visit as soon as they came back.

She listened intently to his stories. He never told her that she looked like death, or that he had a breakdown in front of her. He didn't tell her that yesterday was their anniversary and that they weren't able to celebrate. He only told her about the good thingsâ€”that Carla already gave birth to her kittens with Happy, that Wendy got engaged to Romeo and that Natsu and Lisanna were expecting another child.

With the last news, her smile turned sorrowful and he regretted it immediately. They have been trying to conceive for a while now and so far, all their efforts were futile. They didn't know why though. According to the doctor, Gray didn't have any problems and so did she so maybe they thought they just weren't doing it right.

But up until now, they still haven't conceived and they didn't know if they still wanted to try.

She still couldn't speak, so she could only nod to his stories and smile whenever something made her laugh. So much had happened in a week that it baffled her. He could see it written all over her face--this all happened while I was gone?

When they were finished, he dried her body and wrapped her with the robe she wore on that unfortunate Saturday. She liked it though, because it was the softest of her collection. They went to bed without worry that night and had a dreamless sleep.

On the last day, Lucy was completely healed. He had woken up to the sound of humming and the smell of coffee. Hungry and worn out from the past few days, he headed for the kitchen and was shocked to find his wife cooking breakfast.

"A-Are you sure you should be cooking?" he asked nervously, taking the spatula from her hand and gently nudging her to the table.

"I'm fine, Gray," she told him, huffing as she sat down on the table. "In fact, I have never felt better!"

As much as his mind denied it, he knew it was true. She looked young again and she was glowing. He could see her as the newcomer who entered through Fairy Tail's doors, looking astonished and a little bit lost, but mostly, home. It was as if she knew that the guild would be her family forever.

When he was done cooking, he placed the dishes on the table and they started to eat. This time, there wasn't any tension. Only laughter. They talked so much that halfway through their meal, they had forgotten all about their food.

Lucy spent the rest of the morning finishing her manuscript while he went out to buy her a frappe. Luckily, her favorite latte was back so he bought that instead. She was ecstatic when he handed her the drink and hugged him with so much strength that they nearly toppled over. He steadied them though, and they both smiled.

What they weren't able to do last Saturday, they did today. They went through the afternoon in their room, mostly cleaning but in the evening, they finally went out for dinner.

He picked a not-so-expensive restaurant that they could both afford and ate there. The food was good, the ambiance was great and the band that was playing was adored by Lucy. So all in all, they had such a great night that he thought this was enough to make up for their anniversary.

They returned home feeling as if they had just won the lottery. It felt amazing to be with her again. More than that, it still felt chaotic. His insides wouldn't stop fluttering and his head was buzzing. He felt like a teenager again.

When they were tucked in bed and under the covers, he took a good look at her face. She was being illuminated by the moonlight and her eyes shone as if they were stars. Actually, they looked like stars. But he didn't tell her that and just held her close.

"I had a lot of fun today," she whispered against his neck, her fingers forming figures on his back.

"Me too," he told her, chuckling when she shuddered at how cold his breath was.

"I can't wait to have more fun tomorrow," she said excitedly. She sounded like a kid waiting for Christmas Eve.

He leaned back and petted her head softly, listening to her hum the same tune her mother used to sing. He didn't mind though, and he kissed her when their eyes met. He failed to notice how glassy her eyes looked.

He hadn't realized how much he missed her, but now he did. And now the hole inside him was filled once again and he wanted nothing more than to love her until she shone brighter than the stars themselves. Because Lucy was Lucy, and she was still the woman he decided to marry.

* * *

><p>The following morning, he woke up feeling empty and alone. The space beside him was vacant and since he could smell food, he assumed she was in the kitchen cooking.</p>

But when he got there, it was Erza who was in front of the stove rather than Lucy.

"Erza?" he muttered, puzzled. "Why are you here?"

"We got back this morning and I decided to drop by," she answered quietly, putting only one plate on the table and not two. Gray was confused. Wasn't Lucy going to eat?

"Where's Lucy?"

Erza said nothing and watched him with calculating eyes. He left the dining room to search in the bathroom. She wasn't there. He then went to the living room. He found Natsu and Happy sleeping on the couch but no Lucy. Breathing heavily, he re-entered the kitchen to face his teammate who had gone frighteningly quiet. Too quiet.

"Erzaâ€œ!" he started uneasily, his body breaking out in a cold sweat as he began to tremble. "Where is _Lucy_?"

She closed her eyes and lowered her head. Gray felt all his energy leave him, his skin turning pale and his knees buckling under him. He fell to the floor and covered his ears, not wanting to hear what Erza was about to say.

But he was too late.

"She's gone, Gray. And we don't know where she went."

* * *

><p>For the next few days, the guild used all of their time searching for her. Natsu, Gajeel and Laxus did the best they could to track her

down but all of their leads were dead ends. They assumed that they were old tracks that weren't washed away by the rain.<p>

They contacted the rest of the guilds but none saw her. In the end, they had no choice but to release fliers of her across the continent. Days stretched into weeks, and weeks stretched into months. All of their tracks were gone and Lucy's scent was lost. Still, the search continued. Fairy Tail formed teams that were dispatched according to a schedule, and their task was to search for her in other continents.

By the time they ran out of places to look for, they knew it was a hopeless case. As much as Gray wanted to keep searching for her, they were all exhausted, emotionally and physically. He, too, was worn out by all of their searches and even though he wanted to keep searching, something told him that he would never find her anymore.

The possibilities were endless. She could have changed her appearance, her name, her scentâ€"hell, even her gender. Maybe she was a man now, walking among them. Sometimes he would randomly grab blonde people, asking them the only question that Lucy would be able to answer.

"When did the stress start?"

They all looked at him as if he was crazy and some part of him believed them. But he didn't stop searching. He would ask random people the same question, and when nothing happened, when only confusion was in their eyes, he would walk away.

By the time the guild decided that she was dead, it had already been a year. A whole twelve months since he last saw her. They didn't want to deem her as deceased, but all of the guilds had already pitched in the search and still they couldn't find her. Thus, even though there wasn't a body, a funeral was held and a casket with her things was buried behind the guild.

At that time, Lisanna had already given birth and was taking care of her newborn baby. Romeo and Wendy got married the following month and Happy's kittens started learning how to use their wings. One by one, they started to move on and soon enough, the guild was back to normal.

Except him.

"Hey, stripper." He turned around and saw Natsu giving his three-year old a piggyback ride. "Where are you going?"

Gray raised the bouquet he was holding for his best friend to see. "To visit Lucy," he answered casually, ignoring the worried look in Natsu's eyes. "You coming with?"

"Nah, Lisanna and the kids are going there tomorrow so I'm going with them."

"Ah, I see."

There was an awkward silence and Gray moved to fix his tie. He never did like these things. Lucy didn't too. She said she preferred him shirtlessâ€"even though she taught him how to control his stripping

habit.

"Grayâ€| are you alright?" Natsu asked cautiously, his breath stuck in his throat afterwards. He had been wanting to ask that question for a while now but couldn't find the time and courage to. He didn't even know if now was the right time.

"Yeah, I am," the ice mage replied numbly. To be honest, he wasn't sure. But he had to tell Natsu something. "Justâ€|"

The dragon slayer raised his eyebrows. "Just what?"

Gray shook his mind and turned around. "Nothingâ€"it was nothing."

Natsu opened his mouth to say something but closed it. Instead he turned around and walked away, telling his child to quiet down or else her brother would find them.

When he was finally out of sight, Gray continued his walk to Lucy's grave. It was quiet and cold. Autumn had just arrived and the trees were slowly losing their beautiful green color. Somehow, the season reminded him of Lucy.

Her grave was in the middle, next to the first master. She was considered important enough to stay there and he couldn't agree more, as much as he hated seeing her grave. The weeds around it were just recently removedâ€"Mira, probably. She took the liberty of taking good care of it ever since they put it here.

Other than that, there was a fresh basket of flowers by the foot of the grave, along with old, worn-out books. Most of their gifts were flowers, because she loved them so much. Especially if they were blue. He found his lips twitching into a smile for the very first time.

He gently laid down the bouquet on top of her grave, not at the bottom unlike the rest. He was the only one who had the privilege to do so, but he didn't feel any special from the rest. They were all here to visit her, to pay their respects and to talk to her. What difference was putting his gift higher than the rest make? Nothing.

He sat cross-legged on the grass and looked up, watching the blue ribbon tied around the flowers dance in the air. He thought about the past year and how much agony he'd felt. Plenty, he had to say. It hurt more than the breakdown he had when she was sick. He felt like he had experienced oblivion and it felt strange.

He relived their memories for a while. He remembered her laugh and her silly dances at three in the morning. He recalled her books, which he kept to himself. Every now and then he'd pull one out and read a page or two, enough to remind him of who Lucy was. Because as each day passed, her image got blurry. Maybe she was making him forget her, but that wasn't possible anyway. He wouldn't let that happen.

And Lucy was his wife. She was Lucy Heartfilia Fullbuster, daughter of Layla and Jude Heartfilia. She was born on the first of July, and had a strange addiction to blue. She ran away from her father when

she was only seventeen, and became a member of Fairy Tail not soon after.

Lucy Fullbuster was the best Celestial Mage. She loved and cherished her spirits like they were mortals, and although he never got to see her spirits again, he knew they would meet in the future.

Lucy Fullbuster was many things, but to him, she was his wife. To him, she wasn't a mage, but a woman he had come to love. To him, she was the woman he married and made love to for the first time. She was the woman whom he had loved more than himself.

But Lucy Fullbuster was also the woman he had come to hate the most. He had plenty of reasons, but somehow, he couldn't remember most of them.

He hated her because she was a coward. She had ran away from all of them without an explanation--not even a goodbye. She had given him the best day of his life, only to find out the next day that that was the last. She had told him that she loved him, and yet she managed to leave him effortlessly, as if she didn't even care. As if they weren't even married.

The mere mention of her name sometimes drove him mad. It made him want to scream at the skies. On some days, it only made him cry in despair. He would often spend his nights on the roof of his apartment, staring at the stars. He wondered whether she was among them or if she was still on Earthland. He honestly had no idea.

He hated her for fixing his stripping habit even though she preferred him naked. And how he learned how to properly dip her pen in ink when writing so that the nib wouldn't break. He hated her for leaving the song she loved to hum in his head, the tune haunting him forever.

But most of all, he hated her because in the end, he still forgave her, for Lucy was Lucy and he loved every bit of her. Even the bitter ends.

* * *

><p>Hiraeth - a homesickness for a home that you can't return to, or never was.

**A/N: **Hi, wow, it feels weird writing a story this sad. But anyways, if you have any questions, please PM me or message me on my tumblr because I won't be telling here what happened to Lucy, unless it gets a lot of demands. Look at my profile for my other accounts. Thank you for reading and please leave a review below!

Byee! -Anne :D

* * *

><p>- Please supportread my other stories: **Celebrity Issues, The Devil and the Assassin, Fragile, Life's Challenges, Forgotten Memories, Queen of Stars, A Love That Lasts Forever **and **Going Against The Current.*-*

End
file.